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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an innovative teacher education program designed to prepare early childhood teachers to work in inclusive classroom settings. The program was begun 5 years ago as part of a dramatic reform effort in the College of Education at the University of Tennessee. Designers of the Inclusive Early Childhood Education (IECE) program challenged the assumptions of traditional teacher preparation models and developed an alternative based on the premise that students should be prepared to teach using the same instructional approaches that are being advocated in the program itself. This paper is divided into five sections, each authored by an individual with a different perspective on the IECE program. The section by Marian Phillips takes the perspective of a graduate assistant who has worked as part of the IECE instructional team and supervised interns during their year-long internship. Julie Keyl's section focuses on her experiences as a pre-intern getting ready for the internship year. The section by Sondra LoRe, who is a first-year teacher, reflects on her internship experiences and how they prepared her for her first year as an educator. The section by Lana Collier connects her experiences with the program to her first 2 years of teaching. The final section, by Amos Hatch (a professor in the IECE unit), summarizes the other authors' comments, pointing out elements of the program that make it unique and effective. (Author/EV)

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LEARNING TO TEACH IN INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS: EXPERIENCING AN INNOVATIVE TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM

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Learning to Teach in Inclusive Early Childhood Settings: Experiencing an Innovative Teacher Preparation Program

Introduction

This paper is about an innovative teacher education program designed to prepare early childhood teachers to work in inclusive classroom settings. The program was begun five years ago as part of a dramatic reform effort in the College of Education at the University of Tennessee. Designers of the Inclusive Early Childhood Education (IECE) program challenged all the assumptions of traditional teacher preparation models and developed an alternative based on the simple premise that students should be prepared to teach using the same instructional approaches that are being advocated in the program itself. This paper tells five stories of how that premise plays out in reality.

The paper is divided into five sections, each authored by an individual with a different perspective on the IECE program. Marian Phillips takes the perspective of a graduate assistant who has worked as part the IECE instructional team and supervised interns during their year-long internship. Julie Keyl is currently doing the internship portion of the program and will focus on last year's experiences as a pre-intern getting ready for the internship year. Sondra LoRe is a first-year teacher who will reflect on her internship experiences and how they prepared her for the first year of her career as an educator. Lana Collier graduated from the program two years ago, and she is teaching in Massachusetts after a year's teaching experience in Tennessee. Lana will connect her experiences in the unit with her first two years of teaching. Amos Hatch is a professor in the Inclusive Early Childhood Education unit who will summarize the comments of his co-authors, pointing out elements of the program that make it unique and effective. The goal is to give the reader a view of IECE's innovative approach through the eyes of students and instructors who have lived it. Although we do not expect others to be able to duplicate this program somewhere else, it is hoped that the innovative spirit and willingness to break the rules at the core of IECE's efforts will inspire others to re-examine what they are currently doing. We also believe that even

those who are unable to bring about large-scale structural change can borrow from the ideas presented, adapting them to the special circumstances of where they work.

Marian Phillips

I will graduate this term with a Ph.D. from the College of Education of the University of Tennessee (UT). My involvement with the Inclusive Early Childhood Education unit has been as a supervisor of interns during their year-long classroom internship. In addition, I have worked as part of an instructional team during the "spring block," which is a semester-long experience for seniors designed to prepare them for their internships while satisfying requirements for their undergraduate minor in education. It is from the perspective of a doctoral student that I describe our unique teacher education program.

The faculty had a vision for a new way of preparing teachers. Instead of thinking in terms of teachers being taught a set of skills, they wanted to design a program that allowed the students to construct knowledge about what it means to teach children, and they wanted to collaborate with students in the process. To do this meant that the professors could not stand in front of the class lecturing about a new way of thinking of teaching. They had to actually model for the pre-interns a process that the students could take with them into their future classrooms. In turn, students are encouraged to enter their internship, and later their own classrooms, as partners with their students in learning.

New students entering the program have to be open to changes and to learning in new ways. The challenge to admit students compatible to the unit's philosophy makes the interviewing process an important function of the overall program. Even though most students do not fully understand the extent of the differences in the program, the word has spread that IECE is doing new and exciting things. This has contributed to the large number of students seeking entrance into the Inclusive Early Childhood Education unit. For my four years at UT, I have been a member of one of the biannual admission review boards. The standards for acceptance into the program are high and most accepted candidates greatly exceed the minimum requirements for

entrance into the teacher licensure program.

Once admitted, the students become collaborators with faculty members in the learning process. Prior to the beginning of the initial semester, meetings are held in which the incoming cohort are encouraged to state what they feel they need to learn in order to become successful teachers. The students' needs are carefully incorporated into the curriculum preparation. At this time, the students are introduced to the concept of block scheduling. Rather than meeting 3-hour classes with separate professors, students and faculty work together on campus all day Mondays and half-days on Fridays, and in selected schools all day Wednesdays. Non-traditional scheduling allows time for the faculty and cohort to be together for extended periods of time, thus creating a sense of community--a community of learners. Even the classroom seating arrangement is designed to facilitate learning and collaboration. The students sit in a circle with the faculty members incorporated into the circle.

The faculty, in searching for innovative ways to deliver instruction, incorporated a case-based approach to introduce all topics areas. Through cases, students engage in problem solving using real life situations. They learn to identify issues of conflict, explore options, test possible solutions, and evaluate potential outcomes. The open, honest and, at times, uncomfortable, dialogue that arises among the students challenges personal beliefs and values. An often heard comment is, "I never thought about it like that."

As the name Inclusive Early Childhood Education denotes, "special" and "regular" education experiences are integrated into the curriculum. We believe that regular education teachers must be prepared to work with students displaying diversity in socio-economic status, culture, race, exceptional talents, and disabilities. Through cased-based instruction and experiences in the field, students learn to think inclusively as they strive to meet the wide range of instructional needs of all students.

An important component of each weeks' activities is that of reflective journals. Each student spends time writing about an experience that had particular significance for him/her. It is a time for the students to identify learning issues, personal beliefs, and values in relation to field

experiences or classroom activities. Each student is assigned to one faculty member who reads and responds to the journal entries for the entire semester. The one-to-one ongoing dialogue provides the opportunity for a relationship to develop that allows the student to explore areas of concern, excitement, and new discoveries--both professional and personal.

School-based field experiences comprise at least 50% of the students' time during the program. Pre-internship field experiences allow the students to be in classrooms with teachers and students, to see actual teaching practices at work, and to begin to work with students in the teaching process. It is also a time in which the pre-interns can connect the discourse among college professors and students with actual practices in early childhood classrooms.

The decision to move away from competency-based learning necessitated new and innovative ways of assessing the students' performance. This was problematic initially. How do you evaluate college students who have only known graded systems requiring the regurgitation of facts? Once again, the answer was embedded in the unit's philosophy. As Amos Hatch (1996) wrote, the unit had to "walk the talk." If professional commitment, independent learning, and knowledge construction were to be valued, then to emphasize grades was counter productive. Two approaches to evaluation served to de-emphasize the grade while focusing on the learning process. First, all assignments are either given a "B" or "not yet." The "not yet" means that the students will continue to work on the assignment until it meets the standards for a "B" or better. For an "A," the students contract with professors for extra work that is commensurate with "A" level work. One possible "A" option encourages the students to collaborate in ongoing research projects with one of the professors.

Second, a system of alternative assessment was devised that allows students to demonstrate their thinking and processing of knowledge. On assigned days, learning stations are set up and the students rotate through them, completing tasks related to classroom experiences. The faculty provide feedback in the form of constructive comments. The alternative assessments are completed several times over the course of the semester and provide important data to both the faculty and the students on the cohort's progress.

Another important component of the program is the integration of technology into the block scheduling. The technology component models instructional techniques that future teachers can use in their classroom. Rather than learning computer skills in isolation, this format provides an opportunity for students to gain proficiency in technological skills and learn how those skills are related to classroom instruction. In addition to learning about computer capabilities, the students learn to use email, the internet, and listservs and news groups. This knowledge is utilized in the completion of classroom assignments and alternative assessment tasks.

As a graduate assistant, I not only observed the faculty engaging in a new and exciting process, but experienced the process of constructing knowledge first hand in my own program. The concept of collaboration, a supporting premise for the whole program of undergraduate study, was also readily evident in the initial weeks of my program. I was encouraged to meet with the faculty during the weekly unit meeting as a way of learning about the program and the planning of the spring block for the new cohort. Within weeks, I was asked to participate in separate activities including becoming a member of an admissions review board, becoming a reflective journal reader, and assisting with the planning and implementing of topics selected by the new students for inclusion in the spring curriculum. It was truly a unique experience to see from the inside how the unit collaborated in solving problems and addressed difficult issues related to conflicting philosophies and beliefs about how best to prepare future teachers.

The model of teacher development that the unit conceptualized included three phases that developing teachers go through--discovery, discipline, and divergence. As I reflect on my own learning, I realize that I also moved through levels during my development as a scholar. Early on, through participation in unit meetings, discussions with faculty, and by reading material related to the unit's goals and philosophies, I was discovering new ideas and exploring new ways of thinking.

When the spring semester actual began, I entered my own "field experience." Like all the faculty members, I was present for class meetings. My role initially was that of observer. Over time, I began to take a more active part in class discussions and activities. I assisted in small ways,

reflected on class activities with the faculty after classes, and talked of future changes that could enhance the instructional process. As I became more involved in instructional activities, I learned a new set of teaching tools. I came to the program as one trained in competency-based learning. I could deliver a lecture easily, but quickly saw that the professors did not instruct in this manner. As I worked with faculty to create and implement lessons, I had to learn to instruct without lecturing. This was quite a challenge, requiring hours of thinking and planning. I was learning a new discipline by trying new teaching techniques and designing new methods of instructional delivery.

During their internship year, the interns become proficient in many aspects of teaching. They plan creatively, engage with students, and explore new and innovative ways of teaching under the guidance of mentoring teachers. This phases represents the divergent stage of development. However, the full measure of their potential can not be appreciated until they are masters of their own classrooms. This is also true for me. The ultimate stage of development as a teacher in higher education will be to demonstrate the ability to create an environment in which the students and I actively engage in the process of constructing knowledge. I have achieved this at various times through planning and implementing my own material but always with the support of faculty mentors. The ultimate test will come when I take on the role of professor and am responsible for my own classes.

Not only have I experienced a new way of learning in relationship to the Inclusive Early Childhood Education's teacher preparation program, but I have also experienced the process of constructing knowledge in my own doctoral program. IECE views the preparation of a dissertation as a process that facilitates learning as opposed to the production of a required document. To that end, I have been able to engage in ongoing dialogue about relevant issues and to experience constructive feedback that scaffolds learning as I move to the next level. In addition, doctoral seminars and a faculty/student research group provided a setting that allowed me to participate in activities that facilitated my development as a researcher and scholar. Mentoring and collaborative activities have allowed me to publish, present at conferences, and receive a grant to

support my dissertation research. The culmination of all these activities was the successful defense of my dissertation.

Julie Keyl

Currently, I am an intern at Fort Craig School of Dynamic Learning in Maryville, Tennessee. To get to this point, I had a great deal of preparation at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. As an undergraduate at UT, I took all of the appropriate classes to graduate with a degree in Liberal Arts. My last semester was saved to complete all the classes that are needed to get a minor in elementary education. This last semester is termed the "spring block." This is when my classes consisted of the same 30 students with the same 6 professors. We attended school together as a group on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. In the following, I will discuss the impact this block of classes has had on me this year as an intern working on my Master's degree.

When I think of the spring block as a whole, several topics stand out in my mind. I feel the strong points of the block are the reflection process, the way we are taught, the way our learning is evaluated, and the discussion of difficult issues. As I describe each of these areas, I will include how I felt participating in these activities.

After every class, I had to reflect on how I felt about that day's discussion or learning experience. At the time, I hated writing about my reflections. But, when I read back over them today, they are really helpful in seeing how I have developed as a teacher. For example, a quote from my spring block journal says: "I am worried about behavior management! I am scared the children won't learn." After almost a year working in a school, I am no longer worried about classroom management. In fact, reading over the reflective journals done as part of my internship, I can see that behavior management had become one of my strong points. As an intern, I find myself reflecting about situations and figuring out different ways to handle them. Beginning the reflection process during the spring block has programmed me to automatically reflect every day.

The philosophy of the professors in the block is to teach us the way we should teach in our own classrooms. There was little lecturing. Most of the learning activities are taught by actually

involving students in experiencing the topics. When we learned about cooperative learning, we actually did activities in cooperative learning groups. In one cooperative experience, the professors had us to read a poem then work together to analyze it. I had a different opinion than the rest of the group about the poem. I felt pressured to go with what they were saying so our group could show that we worked together cooperatively, but I just couldn't give in to them. When we had to tell what our group came up with, we gave two different answers: mine and everyone else's. At the beginning of the semester, I had a hard time with this type of activity because I was used to working on my own (and I say that several times throughout my reflective journals). By the end of the semester, I felt I worked better in a group than on my own. I learned a lot about working in groups because, on Wednesdays during spring block, we rotated among four schools in travel teams of eight students. I became really close with my travel group and learned to work with them very well.

How better could you learn about behavior management than to teach to a group of seven children that all had special learning problems? This is what happened when we discussed behavior management. Every student in our room was given a character to play. Everyone was either a teacher or a first grade student. The "students" all had specific difficulties in the classroom (e.g., ADHD or total withdrawal), and the teachers had to get the "class" to accomplish a math lesson. I was assigned to be the teacher of a group of seven students. At the end of the 20 minutes, I was exhausted. I wrote in my journal that I felt all I did was deal with behavior problems and I never even mentioned math. After this lesson, I started questioning my generally positive feelings about inclusion. Now that I am in a real school, I see that it is not as bad as it was in our simulated classroom. We do have some children that show difficult behaviors, but they are easier to work with than I had thought they would be. The spring block prepared me for a worst case scenario that would probably never occur in a real classroom.

Grades were not the reason to learn in the spring block. Instead, I learned because I was interested and wanted to learn about the issues in education. Instead of grades, we were given either complete or "not yet." If something was not done to your potential, then you could re-do it

or work on it a little more. I feel this system worked very well in our block. The reason the "no-grade" system works is that every student in the spring block went through a tough interview process to get there. All of us choose to interview with this program, and it felt like a great accomplishment to be there.

Instead of tests, we had alternative assessments. These assessments allowed me to show what I know, but without cramming a bunch of information into my head for an exam. The questions or situations that were given on the assessments dealt with topics that we had been discussing in class. For example, we had to write our philosophy of early childhood education as if we were in a job interview situation. There was a limited time to answer, so we were forced to sharpen our thinking about what is really important to us. After our first alternative assessment, I could not stop worrying about what grade I would get for my performance. It was hard for me to reprogram my head to remember that it was to show what I knew, not to get a grade. Grades were not the driving force behind my learning in the block. My drive came from the desire to learn as much as I could about teaching.

The content of our block experiences brought up issues and discussions that challenged everyone's beliefs and really made us think about certain topics and issues. Often we were given case studies where we had to figure out what we would do in a situation. I had a hard time figuring out how I felt about many of the situations. For example, we read and discussed a case that posed a dilemma about standardized testing. I did not know how I felt, and I was confused. After discussing the case with the class and professors, the issues became clearer and easier to answer. During class, I often felt like I had to defend my own beliefs. Although it made me uncomfortable, speaking up helped me form my ideas and learn how to explain them to others.

On Monday afternoons during spring block, we had "Academic Circle" time. Academic Circles were informal meetings to discuss issues that came up in schools or in class activities. One memorable Academic Circle was a discussion of the book To Teach by Bill Ayers (1993), and the unit brought Dr. Ayers to campus to participate in our discussion. I remember that during another Academic Circle, I became extremely upset about what some of the other students

were saying. I asked myself, "Why am I getting so upset over their opinions?" I realized later that it was helpful to have my opinions challenged because sometimes I left feeling stronger about an issue or I changed my view. Most of the topics challenged everyone and made us think of what and how we want to teach in our own classrooms.

Now that I am an intern, I look back at the spring block and understand why these topics were brought up. Every topic discussed or every situation we were given has come up this year during the internship. The block has made it easier to see both sides and, with careful reflection, to see how to deal with certain situations. After the block and my internship, I am ready to take on my own classroom. I am prepared to handle almost anything in teaching because I have had practice in a great variety of situations. I already feel like I am an experienced teacher; I am ready for my own room.

Sondra LoRe

I feel butterflies in my stomach as I walk into my new school. Thoughts rush into my head as I pass through the front lobby, down the hallway, and into the classroom: *Am I dressed right? Will the teacher like me? Will the children like me? Who will I sit with at lunch? Will I get lost on my way to the bathroom?* These are the jitters I felt on the first day of my year-long internship at Fort Craig School of Dynamic Learning.

Fort Craig is a year-round, multi-age school. Subjects and units are taught through an integrated thematic approach in nine week sessions. Inclusion is used to integrate special needs children into the classroom according to their Individual Education Plans. Parents involvement is high at Fort Craig, with parents volunteering a minimum of nine hours of service to the school per year. Teachers and parents work closely together to plan appropriate placements and progressions of their child through grade levels. The school has a flexible schedule which allows children to move to a new grade level when they are ready. Due to the year-round calendar, children have the freedom to "transition" or increase time gradually into a new class. For example an eight-year-old child may spend part of the school day in a 3-4-5 classroom for academic areas such are Language

Arts and Sciences and spend part of the day in a K-1-2 classroom for Mathematics. Teachers and parents stress to students the reality that people learn and develop at different rates. Therefore, transitioning students are a regular part of the scenery at Fort Craig.

My internship at Fort Craig was organized according to their school calendar. I worked at the school the same days as my mentoring teacher. I participated in all staff development and inservice programs, and I was placed on the same school committees as my mentoring teacher. Their calendar is on a 45/15 day cycle. Every nine weeks (forty-five school days) is followed by three weeks vacation. Break session classes are organized by teachers who have signed an extended contract with the school system for additional or overtime hours. "Break Session Classes" are taught by teachers and interns during the first week of every vacation period and are designed as enrichment opportunities for students. By planning and participating in Break Session, I had the unique opportunity to work with children and teachers outside of my primary internship placement.

There were some adjustments to being an intern in the beginning. I once heard someone compare the experience to cooking in your mother-in-law's kitchen. You know what you want to cook, and you know how to make it, but you're not sure where all the ingredients are stored or how to work the equipment. The feeling of being watched was often disconcerting in the beginning, especially when everything was new and the desire to please both the students and mentoring teacher was so strong. It may take time for an intern to feel comfortable with "taking over the class" on her own. I am fortunate to have had a mentoring teacher who understood my desire to observe the daily routine and rituals and get to know all of the children individually before teaching the whole group.

As I progressed from observer to solo teaching experiences, the cooking analogy surfaced once more. It is important to respect your mother-in-law's kitchen when you use it--take care of the equipment, keep things in order, and clean up when your finished cooking. The same holds true for being an intern. I took care of the students by staying with existing routines and procedures set by my mentoring teacher. I kept the class in order by having the same expectations

for student behavior as my mentoring teacher. And finally, I cleaned-up when I finished teaching, maintaining the order and environment of her classroom.

In the first semester of my internship, my IECE professors were a constant support as I began to build confidence and form beginning philosophies of teaching and education. I kept a journal of my reflections on everything going on around me, which I shared on a weekly basis with my professors. My professors were my sounding board. These weekly exchanges were a great source of support for me. The guidance and advice I received during this time was invaluable. I felt as though they were my link between classroom studies and my experiences in the "real world" of teaching.

During the second half of my internship, my professors helped me complete an action research project. This was our opportunity to research an area of education and teaching of our own choice. Projects ranged from surveys and grant writing to case studies of individual children. Throughout the second half of the school year, I continued to meet with my professors to share research, literature sources, and observations to complete my project.

My professors were also my first evaluators as an intern. Being evaluated by my professors served as yet another step in my growth as a teacher. They were the ones who had coached me through my pre-internship. My professors knew me better than any teacher at my internship school in the beginning of the year. Therefore, it was a logical and natural progression that they be my first evaluators. They knew my potential and the depth of my passion for teaching. As I progressed through the school year and school/staff evaluations, the same professors delighted in my accomplishments and growth because they had been involved from the beginning and could see the progress.

An intern is also largely dependent upon her mentoring teacher. Therefore, a successful intern is often the reflection of an exceptional mentor. As I think back on my internship year, I feel fortunate to have had the experience of working with an extremely talented and gifted mentoring teacher. The wealth of knowledge and rich experiences that I gained could not be read in a book or learned from educational videos. My hands-on experiences enriched my teaching as well as my

life.

Inclusive Early Childhood's approach to teacher education makes sense because it is based on real-life experiences. As an intern, I had the opportunity to learn and grow as I practiced my beginning teaching skills. I was able to do this in a safe, non-threatening environment mainly because of the support and constant encouragement of my professors. When I think of my internship as a whole, Miss Frizzle from the Magic School Bus stories (e.g., Cole, 1994) comes to mind. Miss Frizzle encourages the children to try, discover, and most importantly, to "Make mistakes!" Without the opportunity to be an intern, I would have been unable to turn my miscues and mistakes into learning experiences. With the help of our professors, each intern assembled a portfolio of his/her teaching experiences throughout the school-year. Now my portfolio is the most treasured memento from my internship. Just like the wedding album is a representation of a loving relationship, my portfolio is a picture scrapbook of my growth as an intern.

At the end of my internship, I was fortunate to be hired as a teacher at Fort Craig. Acquiring a position in the same school as my internship experience has proved to be a benefit for myself as well as the staff and students. I am a familiar face to the students, parents, and teachers. The school's routines, procedures, and mission statement were a part of my vocabulary from day one. As a teacher, I now have an opportunity to see just how beneficial my internship experiences are to my teaching. On a daily basis I find myself using some of the techniques I had the opportunity to "try out" during my internship year. So much of my teaching style was established before I even began my new teaching position through months of practice in my internship.

I began the school year with a level of confidence that could not have been established without the benefit of a full year of practice teaching. The internship experience enabled me to build my teaching foundation before I was hired. In teaching, as with any profession, experience is essential to success. These days I'm no longer cooking in what feels like my mother-in-law's kitchen. I have my own kitchen! I know where all of the ingredients are and how to use the equipment well enough to prove I'm a pretty good cook!

Lana Collier

I graduated with my Master's degree from the Inclusive Early Childhood Unit at the University of Tennessee in 1996. I then took a position at Fort Craig School, where I had recently completed my internship. My first year teaching at Ft. Craig I was assigned to a multi-age, third-fourth-fifth grade. The experiences and knowledge I gained from my internship and time spent in the Inclusive Early Childhood Education unit have been very valuable to my teaching career. Over the past year and a half, I have taken the knowledge I gained from my teacher preparation program, tested it, and molded it to form my own teaching style and philosophy. The following is a short version of the beginning of my journey into teaching.

We learn so many things during our years in school which are soon forgotten or replaced by knowledge gained on the job. As a graduate student in Inclusive Early Childhood, almost one hundred percent of my studies were done on the job. As an intern, I was in the classroom finding my place as a teacher almost everyday. I was expected to plan and carry out lessons, grade papers, participate in staff meetings, assist my mentoring teacher, and be observed. I learned methods, management, how to team teach, and much more under my mentoring teacher. When I finally had my own classroom, I took these lessons and shaped them into my own personal style of teaching.

I remember that in my mentoring teacher's classroom students were usually required to do their work at their desk. When I set up my classroom, I decided to establish several areas in the room where students could complete their assignments. If they wanted to work away from their desk, they could go to one of these areas as long as they stayed on task. I felt comfortable with this, and it worked well with the students I had. But even as I took on my own style, if I found myself in a difficult situation, I would ask myself, "How would my mentoring teacher handle this?"

I also used lessons learned from my professors as I taught my first year. They taught us to reflect on our teaching, to ask questions, to know what our resources are, and to use them. I have always reflected on my actions, decided if what I had done worked, and then continued or disregarded that action. I was excited to find that I could also use this in my teaching. Many times

my first year, I found myself stopping, looking at the lesson I was teaching, wondering why half the class (or in some instances one child) was confused, looking at and questioning what I was doing, pinpointing the problem, and then changing my strategy. For instance, I began my first year trying to do a novel study with the entire class. I was using the same method that was used during my internship. I found out there were so many different needs in my class that one set of students was not learning as I hoped. There was confusion for some, boredom for others, and it just wasn't flowing. As soon as I noticed there was a problem, I began to look at my students and reflect on what we were doing. I realized I needed to have different groupings instead of one large group if my students were going to feel successful. Reflection enabled me to do what was best for my class.

I also found reflection helpful because it was a constant reminder that I will always be evolving as a teacher, and I won't get everything right the first time. Fresh out of my internship, I had great ideas about how I was going to be able to implement ALL of the exciting new approaches to teaching that I had learned. I was soon overwhelmed, and I realized that to do this and to do it well I needed to slow down. I needed to do what I was comfortable with, and add onto that gradually. It was going to be a lot of work if I was going to be like the veteran teachers I admired. I also found that some of these methods didn't necessarily work for me or fit into my style of teaching. If I didn't feel successful or comfortable with a method, I accepted that it just wouldn't work for me no matter how great it sounded in a college classroom.

Inclusion can be a scary thought for a teacher. Even with my training in inclusion, I found it frightening to face a class with three gifted students, two children with ADHD, and one student who could barely write a sentence. My saving grace was knowing what my resources were and using them. I remember as a pre-intern sitting in on M-team meetings, meeting special educators and resource teachers, and being told over and over don't be afraid to use them. I took that advice and often made the trip down the hall to ask opinions of my school's resource teacher and guidance counselor. I didn't feel alone, and the fear disappeared.

As I look back on my preparation program, I feel very fortunate. I talk to colleagues and

friends who were trained at different universities or in different units, and I feel that I had an advantage over them because of how and what we were taught. They had experiences where they were only in the classroom for six weeks, or if they were there all year they only stayed half a day. I had the advantage of being there all day every day. Some didn't have mentors who worked with them or let them do a lot. My mentor and I worked so well together we were team-teaching comfortably by the end of the year. I was very shy and insecure when I came into the program, but because I was allowed to grow at my own pace and find my own style of teaching, I overcame those obstacles.

I don't think any program can prepare you for everything. It feels overwhelming to have responsibility for twenty students and know that YOU have to answer for them. It is scary knowing parents are coming to you for answers about their child. There is no longer someone there to send the children and parents to when you don't have the answers, so you have to answer these things yourself. These are examples of things that cannot be taught. But I had an advantage because the things that are usually learned the first year on the job, like classroom management, were learned within the safety net provided in an internship experience.

I have left Fort Craig and moved into a new teaching position in Massachusetts. I am now teaching a pre-kindergarten class full of four- and five-year-olds and facing a much different set of needs than a class of third, forth, and fifth graders. In this new setting, I can look back objectively at mistakes I made (like trying too many new things at once), lessons I learned (like how to work with a gifted child), and things I did well (like organization and planning). Throughout the first year, I remember feeling insecure about what I was doing and overwhelmed with what was expected. Now I see that I was lucky my first year of teaching. I was able to work with a staff I knew and professors from UT who were around to add support, and I was familiar with the school's way of doing things. Dealing with my mistakes and fears has made me who I am today. I feel like I have more control, I am more confident, and my teaching and behavior management come more naturally. I strongly believe that the uniqueness of the experiences I had in the IECE block and internship have been key to my success.

Amos Hatch

I am one of the professors who built this alternative teacher education program "from scratch." Along with five other faculty, three graduate assistants, and five cohorts of students, I have spent a large portion of my professional life for the past five years developing and refining the program described in this paper (for a description of the processes involved in founding the IECE unit, see Cagle, Coleman, Benner, Hatch, Judge, & Blank, 1997). For me, this paper is an example of how IECE works. Students and instructors are partners in the learning endeavor in the same way Marian, Julie, Sondra, Lana, and I are partners on this paper. In IECE, students and instructors construct experiences through their own unique perspective and add to the learning of others by sharing and articulating that perspective. That same approach guided how our team created this paper. Students and instructors own the program and are responsible for contributing to its success. When students and instructors describe IECE, they use the phrase "our unit." Involving three generations of students in this project demonstrates the commitment and involvement that characterize our unit.

In my part of the paper, I will point out what I see as interesting patterns in the comments that my colleagues wrote. These patterns characterize important elements of what IECE is all about. I will conclude with a brief discussion of what others might learn from our attempts to create an innovative early childhood education program.

Each of my co-authors noted the importance of reflection in her development. Developing reflective teachers is a goal of many teacher preparation programs (Ross, Bondy, & Kyle, 1993), but helping novice professionals learn how to reflect and use reflection as a tool for improving their teaching is easy to talk about and hard to do. In IECE, we have tried a variety of strategies to encourage reflection. In all our work, we treat teaching as a complex, professional activity requiring thoughtful decision making. All IECE activities are designed to encourage and validate intelligent analysis, action, and assessment. Students write in reflective journals throughout their program. They analyze and react to assignments verbally, in writing, and on email. We invite interns and former students to share their journals and talk to new students about reflection, and we

try to model reflection as we talk about our own teaching and as we give feedback to their reflections. In many ways, reflective thinking is a habit of mind--a disposition that is developed as much from the way we do things as the things we do. Marian, Julie, Sondra, and Lana demonstrate the disposition to reflect in their comments. An email reaction to a micro-teaching activity from one of our current "block" students captures the power of reflection to bring insight to new professionals:

> This experience also helped me understand not to judge the teachers that I observe because they may have good reasons for doing things they do, even if it does not look appropriate to me. So many times people see teaching as a "doing" job because outward actions are easier to see. But I have come to understand that teaching is more of a "thinking" job, and if it is not based on thought it will be destructive at worst and ineffective at best.

All of my colleagues demonstrated their capacities for independent thinking. As Marian mentioned above, IECE adopted a talent development approach to reconceptualizing how we organize experiences. Our "3-D Model" of discovery, discipline, and divergence provides an alternative to the assembly line model of putting students through a series of 3-hour courses where they acquire a disconnected set of discrete competencies and skills. At the divergent stage, teachers are able to creatively "expand, adapt, and personalize their skills and understandings" (Lesar, Benner, Habel, & Coleman, in press, p. 9) in the same ways experts in other fields express their talents. Marian, Julie, Sondra, and Lana show they have the capacity to be independent, divergent thinkers. We also have included in the appendix an "IECE Bill of Rights" that was produced by this year's new student cohort. The Bill of Rights was the creation of two students who volunteered to pull together ideas gathered in a cooperative learning activity designed to explore the components of a constructive learning environment. The content of the document indicates the tone of responsibility, learning, and mutual respect that drives our unit's work; but we include it here as an example of how, when given the chance, individuals new to the profession can create something that goes well beyond the usual textbook lessons on cooperative learning or classroom

rules.

Each of my colleagues has a "can do" attitude about her profession. One of our current interns is rooming with an intern from another unit in our college. The intern from the other unit said something that captures an important element of our approach: "In IECE, you're teachers; in my program, we're students until we finish our internship." We believe competence and confidence develop in learning contexts with high expectations and opportunities to take action. We expect our students to think and act like professionals from their first experiences with us. Look at the following comments from my co-authors and note their self-assurance and orientation to action:

- "Mentoring and collaborative activities have allowed me to publish, present at conferences, and receive a grant to support my dissertation research" (Marian).
- "I am ready to take on my own classroom. I am prepared to handle almost anything in teaching because I have had practice in a variety of situations." (Julie)
- "I began the school year with a level of confidence that could not have been established without the benefit of a full year of practice teaching." (Sondra)
- "Dealing with my mistakes and fears has made me who I am today. I feel like I have more control, I am more confident, and my teaching and behavior management come more naturally." (Lana)

Of course, our program can not take all the credit for the remarkable development we see in students like my colleagues on this paper. IECE has the opportunity to select students from a pool of qualified and committed candidates. We try to chose individuals who will be challenged to grow and learn in our program, then give them experiences that maximize their chances for successful development. We are proud of our students and convinced that our new ways of working with them facilitate their professional growth.

As I have written elsewhere, our program is not a "model" that can be transplanted easily because it grew "out of the special interests and constraints of a special group of people in a special

situation" (Hatch, 1996, p. 48). What others may learn for our efforts is that change is possible, even in the bureaucratic quagmire of the university. We were part of a college that expected change and innovation, and still we faced (and continue to face) the expectation that we would regress back to our traditional ways of doing teacher preparation. Again, we are not an example of "what's best," because best will turn out to depend on where and with whom you are standing. We are an example of "what's possible," and we encourage everyone involved in preparing early childhood teachers to explore the possibilities with us.

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APPENDIX

IECE Bill of Rights

1. I reserve the right to have and defend my own opinions, while respecting the opinions of others.

2. I have the right to question and to make mistakes as a part of the learning process.

3. I have the right to expect preparation and enthusiasm from my colleagues and professors.

4. I have the right to be taught the way I am expected to teach.

5. I have the right to expect attentive listening and social courtesy from my colleagues and professors.

6. I have the right to rely on my colleagues and professors for assistance, encouragement, and support.

7. I have the right and the responsibility to participate in open-minded, friendly discussions.

8. I have the right to expect opportunities to apply the knowledge I gain.

9. I have the right and responsibility to reflect on my experiences, in order to enrich the learning process.

10. I have the right to develop as a professional, through both individual effort and guidance from colleagues and professors.